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DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, AF/C, S/CRS, SE WILLIAMSON, NSC FOR  
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: SLM/MM FRUSTRATED AND WEAKENED TO THE BREAKING POINT

1. (U) SUMMARY: On June 17, Mohammed Suliman, a senior leader of SLM/Minni Minnawi (SLM/MM) and Secretary General of the TDRA, railed against the NCP, stating that the ruling party should openly admit its neglect of the DPA, rather than deceptively undermine the peace agreement. Suliman's fiery speech at a Darfur Peace Conference elicited a strong NCP response, with one leader barging into the VIP room following the speech shouting, "That is just his perspective, wait till you hear ours!" Earlier in the week, three other leaders of SLM/MM separately threatened that without immediate implementation of the DPA they "may have to resort to other desperate means." These leaders also reported that: Minnawi narrowly averted a deadly attack on his convoy during a field visit east of Kutum on June 14; that SLM/MM has lost the loyalty of many important field commanders; and that some of SLM/MM's political leadership may defect to more "active and effective rebel movements such as JEM." END SUMMARY

SLM/MM RAILS OUT AT NCP AT DPA CONFERENCE  
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2. (U) On June 17, the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority (TDRA) and Sudan Center for Research and Strategic Studies, a prominent Khartoum think-tank hosted a conference entitled "Darfur Peace: Between the Present and the Future." Muhammad Suliman, Secretary General of the TDRA, began his opening remarks stating that the conference comes at a time of deteriorating security, increased frequency of human rights abuses, and continued violations of ceasefire agreements. Suliman stated that the implementation of the DPA has come to a "complete standstill since June 2007," and that differences between DPA parties are widening. He also stated "The NCP continues in its retreat from DPA implementation and even refuses to sit with the SLM in joint meetings to negotiate points of difference." For example, stated Suliman, the DPA continues to stagnate in the first of six stages in the security protocols. Suliman added that this failure to implement the DPA has started to impact the well-being of the SLM army, as its soldiers have defected to other movements, and as it does not have enough "daily bread" to sustain itself. In his strongest words, Suliman stated that "if the government wants to retreat from its commitments it should do it openly and blatantly. There is no need for its sly attempts or its threats to join together other parties against us - such as the Declaration of Commitment (DOC) parties who defected from us."

3. (SBU) Following the speech in a short break, SLM/MM leaders praised the strong remarks, while NCP representatives criticized Suliman's words. Darfur Security Arrangements Implementation Commissioner Lieutenant General Mohammed Ahmed Al-Dabi burst into the room yelling, "This speech was nonsense. All of you from the embassies and the U.N. better stay for my speech. That is just his perspective, wait till you hear ours!" Other NCP representatives stated that it was inappropriate for Suliman to open the conference with a strong statement where the NCP was not allowed the opportunity to directly respond. At the start of the next session, Khalid Hussein, the Director of the Sudan Center for Research and Strategic Studies, stated that Suliman's words are not reflective of his center and that other parties will have a chance to respond,

while panel leader and Darfur activist Yousif Bakhit reminded the presenters to be respectful in their presentations.

14. (U) (Note: Suliman's remarks follow other strong statements from SLM/M. On June 16 a spokesmen for SLM/M spokesman El-Tayeb Khamis told "Al-Ayyam" that his movement will soon specify a "final date to implement the DPA with the National Congress Party. Khamis stated that "if we receive no response from the NCP, we will take other options." End Note.)

#### MINNAWI AVERTS ATTACK ON HIS CONVOY

15. (SBU) On June 15, SLM/MM parliamentarian Ali Traio told poloff that Minni Minnawi learned of an impending attack on his convoy on June 14 and re-routed his travel at the last minute. According to Traio, Minnawi informed the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) western sector commander of his planned route between Kutum and El-Fasher and requested safe passage between the two cities. Traio stated that the sector commander granted permission and ensured Minnawi of the safety of the road. Traio stated that despite this pledge, Minnawi learned of a government-supported militia attack on his convoy and he re-routed his travel plan at the last minute. Traio reported that Minnawi's intelligence was accurate, as other SLM/MM field commanders confirmed a heavily armed Arab militia moving along Minnawi's original route. "There are a lot of dirty tricks going on in this country. Everything is possible and nothing is certain," commented Traio. Another SLM/MM press spokesman, Sayf Al-Haroun, separately told poloff a similar version of the story above, but cautioned that the militia group planning to attack Minnawi may have not been controlled by the GoS.

#### "SECURITY ACT REGULARIZES THE JANJAWEEED"

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16. (SBU) Traio stated that despite his objections the National Security Act would likely pass. Traio stated that as drafted, the National Security act included a clause about "additional reserve forces," something Traio interpreted as "the regularization of the janjaweed because the president has the power to institute a non-regular police force whenever he wants." (Note: On June 16 the National Security Act did pass in the National Assembly. Section 14.1 in the draft bill reads, "Constitution of the Additional Reserve Forces: The President of the Republic may, by an order as he makes, pursuant to a recommendation from the minister, may constitute any additional reserve forces to perform general, special or temporary duties." End Note.) Traio stated that the SPLM has not been an ally on this issue, saying "it seems like they have some type of deal set up with the NCP."

#### SLM-MM INTERNALLY DIVIDED

17. (SBU) On June 17, SLM-MM spokesman Sayf Al-Haroun emphasized that his movement is fracturing along ethnic and political lines. He stated that Mustafa Mohamed Ahmed Tirab, the Secretary-General of SLM/MM and State Minister at the Ministry of Federal Government, leads one faction of SLM rivaling that led by Minnawi. Haroun also stated that as a non-Zaghawa he feels excluded from the movement. Once a head of SLM/MM's Liberation Council, the sole spokesman of SLM/MM, and SLM/MM's liaison to the U.S., Al-Haroun said that he now has been pushed to the "outer circle" of Minnawi's movement along with other non-Zaghawa. He stated that he was frustrated that senior SLM/MM leaders did not invite him to a meeting with Special Envoy Williamson and that he no longer has any influence in the movement. "Which SLM/MM will you work with?" asked Al-Haroun.

#### "MINNI IS LOSING CONTROL POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY"

18. (SBU) Al-Haroun also stated that Minnawi has been in Darfur because he is slowly losing the loyalty of his commanders and the support of the people in SLM/MM controlled areas. (Note: As of June 17, Minnawi has been in the field in Darfur for over three weeks. End Note.) According to Al-Haroun, Minnawi visited some areas paying compensation to families who were abused by SLM/MM forces. Al-Haroun also stated that Minnawi has lost the loyalty and control of several influential field commanders in SLM/MM

controlled-areas. Haroun said that many of these commanders "are not interested in aligning with another rebel group," but just controlling what they have. Haroun reported that some of these independent commanders even turned Minnawi away when he tried to visit him. Haroun said that where SLM field commanders remain loyal to Minnawi, there is so much banditry and crime that the movement is losing the support of the local population. "For the last two years SLM/MM has been dying very slowly, so what is left for us," questioned Haroun.

"I, TOO, AM ALMOST READY TO DEFECT TO JEM."

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19. (SBU) Also on June 17, a SLM/MM contact told poloff that he is ready to defect to JEM or another rebel movement. According to this contact, JEM may now be militarily stronger than SLM/MM for the first time since the start of the Darfur conflict. "Some soldiers that made SLM/MM strong have defected to JEM and they are building up that organization," stated this contact. Even though JEM has an Islamic ideology and Khalil Ibrahim thinks more of Khartoum than Darfur, "he is a hero to us for making it to Omdurman," stated this contact. This contact added that he is in close communication with JEM leaders and that he is strongly considering returning to the field and joining JEM. He stated, "The only option is hard because we signed a ceasefire agreement - but it seems like there is no option except pulling back to Darfur and joining other rebel movements." (Note: This individual's name and contact information is available from Post through siprnet communications. End Note).

COMMENT

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110. (SBU) SLM/MM's frustration is growing, and it will not be surprising if Minnawi withdraws from the Government of National Unity in protest before the end of 2008. More troubling than the political ramifications of such a move are other possibilities such as: 1) Minnawi continuing to lose his command and control structure in SLM/MM controlled areas - leading to further fragmentation, the birth of a new rebel movements, and an even more divided Darfur landscape; 2) More individual political and military SLM/MM leaders defecting to JEM or other rebel movements, feeding the rebellion with skilled warriors and political strategists 3) Minnawi returning to what he knows best, re-organizing his fighters and returning to his pre-DPA activities. All of these are real possibilities in 2008 as SLM/MM approaches the breaking point.

111. (SBU) In the absence of any other agreement and no progress by the UN/AU peace process, serious consideration should still be given by the international community to pushing for the implementation of

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the DPA, including disarmament of the janjaweed. Unfortunately, the international community has intellectually and politically "moved on" from the DPA. It remains a perfectly good agreement which had a massive investment of time and energy at the time from the USG, and if implemented even part-way could have provided some incentive to other rebel groups to join in further peace talks. The NCP remains interested only in the portions of the DPA relating to the disarmament of SLA forces, but should be pressed more aggressively by the international community for further concessions on broader security arrangements, as well as guarantees for IDPs. Such a move could breathe new life into what is now an almost moribund peace process in Darfur. The problem is that the DPA in and of itself will not bring peace to Darfur, but its implementation could prevent further fragmentation and anarchy from spreading in the troubled region. That is probably just not good enough for a distracted international community deeply concerned about Darfur but daunted by the complexity of the issues involved.

FERNANDEZ